LETTERS - V DRAWER 26 MEETING LINCOLN

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Meeting Lincoln

Original letters describing encounters with the 16th President of the United States

Surnames beginning with

V

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Vallandigham, George B. Chicago, Ill., Burial Los Angeles, Calif.

5136 STRATFORD ROAD,
Los Angeles, California.
June 17, 1931.

Mr. Howard K. Terry,
9528 Wisteria St
Bustleton,,
Philadelphia, Penn

Dear Comrade: Please pardon my long delay in answering your letter of March 6th, coming through the courtesy of Comrade Kimball of the National Military Home, California. A few days after Ireceived your letter I took my discharge from the Home, and have rented an appartment at the above address where I am cared for by nearby relatives and kind friends, who look after my material needs. In the daytime I am Partly blind, and after nightfall, if out doors, am totally blind and have to be led about. As per your request I am sending yo you a short sketch of my service and contact with President Lincoln.

oooooo

I was attending College, when on October 6th 1862 I enlisted in Company E 125th Ohio Infantry. At Camp Cleveland, with the consent of our ColonelEmerson Opdycke,I with two other comrades of the company,purchased the best guns then to be had in the market (Henry Rifles-- 16 shooters). We bought our own ammunition,as the Government did not at that

time did not furnish ammunition or guns of that make. These three guns were the only ones of that kind in our whole brigade, and under the orders of Col. Opdycke used them for sharpshooting. I served with the regiment in all of its campaigns and battles, including Chicamauga and Missionary Ridge, until in May 15, 1864, in the battle of Resaca, Ga., on the Atlanta campaign, I was put out of action, reported wounded, sent North, I was not allowed to return to my regiment, but later sent to Camp Douglas, Illinois and put in the Veteran Reserve Corps.

After the death of the President his body was brought to Chicago on its way to his final resting place at Springfield. His body lay in state in the corridor of the court house. On this occasion I was detailed as a guard to assist the police, and was given a block on Michigan Avenue as my beat, during the passage of the funeral cortege. When relieved, I asked the guard onthe next block if he would like to see Lincoln. On assenting we fixed bayonets on our guns and by using a little strategy we succeeded in passing through the immense crowd that surroundedthe building, entered the corridor and saw the President as he lay in his casket. We passed out through the crowd in the same manner as we entered.

Comrade Kimball in his letter to you mentioned the lady in the President's box in Ford's Theater on the night he was shot as having been a sister of my aunt. Yes, she was Miss Belle Har-

(Court)

ris, a daughter of Senator Harris of New York. Her sister Almira, was the wife of my Uncle James Warner, of Brooklyn, N. Y. When the President was shot Miss Harris held hid head on her lap for a time. She wore a white dress and it was splotched with his blood. Later that portion of her dress was cut out and framed, and I believe now is in a museum in Washington. I have seen it. I have a fine photograph of Miss Harris, given to my wife while living with her uncle in Brooklyn, before my marriage.

Hoping you will find this sketch suitable for your Reminiscenses of our beloved President, I also inclose a couple of newspaper clippings which you may find of interest.

Wishing you continued long life and happiness,

I remain your Comrade,

George B. Vallandigham

VanSant, Samuel R.

Minnesota Soldiers Home

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TREASURER OF THE BOARD
THE LEAMINGTON HOTEL,
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

4400 West Lake Harriet Blvd.,
Minneapolis, Minn.
March 8, 1933.

Mr. Howard K. Terry,
Bustleton,
Philadelphia, Peana.

Dear Mr. Terry:

I owe you an apology for the long delay in answering you letter. I recently met with an accident and am confined to the house. In going over my papers I found your letter and at this late date I will answer it.

I never saw Abraham Lincoln, altho as a boy I was very much interested in his nomination and election. During his memorable election I took a very active part, I joined a "Wide Awake" company, semi-military organization. We were uniformed with an oil cloth cap and a military cape of the same material and carried a torch, we drilled and march up and down the streets of Illinois shouting for old abe, the Rail Splitter, went to every Republican meeting in my town of Rock Island, and several other nearby cities. I heard such noted speakers as Salmon P. Chase, afterward one of Lincoln's cabinet; Owen Lovejoy the great abolition orator and a member of Congress; Dick Yates, governor of Illinois; and the renouned orator, Robert G. Ingersoll, and others.

After the election and the South attempted to secede, and when Mr. Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers I signed the muster roll but on account of my youth I was rejected. A year later I enlisted in Co. A., 9th Illinois Cavalry, and served more than three years. I was elected Commander of the Dept. of Minn. in 1894, and Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1909. I had a signal honor conferred upon me in June this year, I was unanimously chosen as a Delegate-at-Large to the Republican National Convention in Chicago which nominated the great statesman Herbert Hoover, and was introduced to the Convention as the only member of the Grand Army of the Republic who was present at that great gathering.

At my advanced age I can truly say that the greatest thing in life is service---service for others, so in conclusion I will just add the greatest thing in my life was my service in the Union Army during the Civil War.

Respectfully yours,
Samuel R. VanSant

Varner, Isaih Pittsfield, Ill. speech Versailles, Ill.

August 24,1932

Editor,Chadwick Review
Chadwick,Ill.

Dear Sir:

Concerning the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Ft.Wayne, Ind., which I have just read about in the Chadwick Review, about the oldest living man or woman living in Illinois who has known, heard or talked to Abraham Lincoln, I think my grandfather, Isaiah Varner, Versailles, Brown county, Ill. is probably the oldest man. He is 96 years old. His wife was a cousin of Abraham Lincoln, her name was Marie Hanks Varner, and she died in 1918.

Mr.Varner is a very active man. He chops wood every day and does lots of work and can walk to town from his farm 1 1/2 miles from town. He does not look to be more than 80 years old.

I have heard him speak of Abraham Lincoln and tell of when one of the Hanks, his brother-in-law, went to Pittsfield, Ill., to hear Lincoln make a speech, and he said he shook hands and talked with him.

But as he was a relative by marriage he might have had more intimate relations with him. For more information write him at Versailles. Hoping this will help find the oldest person, I remain,

Yours truly,

Mrs. Ivan Ham
Route 3
Savanna,Ill.

Voorhees, Charles W. Springfield, Ill. Philadelphia., Pa.
Friend of Willie's

Phila. Man Remembers Lincoln As Friend Who Called Him 'Son'

Charles W. Voorhees, 78, Went to School With Emancipator's Boys—Has Piece of Actress' Dress Stained With Martyr President's Blood

Abraham Lincoln lives especially vividly on this, the eve of his 119th birthday tomorrow, in the memories of those few persons now living who knew him.

To Charles W. Vorhees, now 78 and said to be the oldest legionnaire in Pennsylvania, the Great Emancipator still is very much alive. Personal recollections and many valued relics of the martyred President and his family give life to Lincoln in the mind of Mr. Vorhees.

"I went to school with Willie Lincoln," said Mr. Vorhees. "We sat across from each other in the same room. I knew Robert Lincoln, too, but not nearly so well, because he was a few years older and was in a higher grade. I borrowed a fourth-grade reader from Robert once to study a piece for the Friday-night 'speaking exercises' at the school.

"I won a prize with that speech. Willie and I often won prizes for speaking. And I kept that Fourth Reader," he added with a chuckle.

Lincoln Called Him "Son"

"I have several other significant reminders of Lincoln. Laura Keene, the actress, who rushed off the stage when Lincoln was shot and hurried into the box where he lay, gave me a piece of the blue dress she wore. The piece of cloth is stained with blood that flowed from Lincoln's wound as his head lay on her lap in the box."

Born in 1850 in Bound Brook, N. J., and orphaned while still a baby, Mr. Vorhees had been taken by his aunt to Springfield, Ill. There it was that he came to know the Lincolns.

"I used to go to the Lincoln home about twice a week," said Mr. Vorhees, "and Mr. Lincoln always called me 'son.' During the presidential campaign we in Springfield had the best parades I ever saw—haywagon loads of rails, mauls and the like.

"Then just before Lincoln went to Washingtoon to be inaugurated I saw Stephen A. Douglas congratulate him on his election during a reception that was held at the State House in Springfield. I was sitting in the balcony with my aunt, and that was about the last I saw of Willie and Mr. Lincoln.

"I was still living in Springfield when Lincoln was brought there for burial. That was one of the most impressive funerals I ever witnessed."

Joined Army With Own Drum

Mr. Vorhees has, besides all his mementoes of Lincoln, several other prized possessions, including his long string of medals that indicate his part in the affairs of his country. During the Civil War he wanted to become a drummer in the service, but his aunt and uncle thought him much too young, so he saved up his pennies and bought himself a drum. One of the soldiers in Springfield taught him to play it, and he joined this unit unofficially.

Ledger Photo

CHARLES W. VORHEES

Thus began his long career as a soldier. In 1872 he enlisted and saw service with the Sixth Cavalry in the Indian wars of '74 and '75. Later he came East and joined the Second Infantry of the Pennsylvania National Guard, of Philadelphia. He saw service on the Mexican border just prior to the World War, although he was beyond the retirement age. He planned to go to the World War with the 108th Regiment, but was mustered out of the service on account of his age.

He now is vice commander of David H. Lane Post No. 188. of the American Legion, 1323 North 13th street, and lives at 1315 North Hutchinson street with his wife and two children.

PRESENT LEGION AWARDS

Left to right: Charles Voorhees, of the David H. Lane Post, presenting the American Legion Award to Selma Vigderman at the Widener Public School, and Bathon Hirshey receiving his medal from Commander Morris Weirman.

6/20/29

LEGION MEDALS AWARDED

Left to right: Mrs. Anna Davidson, of the War Mothers Association, handing a Legion Medal to Helen Kiesel; Philip S. Polis, of David H. Lane Post, and John Sulisich receiving a medal from Charles Voorhees at the Widener Public School yesterday.

4/2/28

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